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Letter dated 6 April 2016 from the representatives of Angola, China and Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to inform you that on Monday, 25 April 2016, the Security Council plans to hold an open debate, co-sponsored by China, Angola and Senegal, at the permanent representative-level, on the theme "Peace consolidation in West Africa: Piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea". The related concept note is attached (see annex).

We should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ismael **Gaspar Martins**
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to the United Nations

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Ambassador
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(*Signed*) Gorgui **Ciss**
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Annex to the letter dated 6 April 2016 from the representatives of Angola, China and Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Chinese and English]

Concept note

Security Council open debate on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea

Background

As President of the Security Council for the month of April, China will co-sponsor with Angola and Senegal an open debate on the theme "Peace consolidation in West Africa: piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea", to be held by the Council on 25 April.

The Gulf of Guinea is one of the regions that has been most plagued by piracy and armed robbery at sea. Since 2011, the region has fallen victim to frequent incidents of piracy, which threatens the safety of navigation and inflicts billions of dollars of economic losses on the countries along the Gulf every year. Most recently, pirate attacks have been on the rise in the region, with their scope further spreading northward to Guinea and southward to the waters off Angola. The number of hostages and the ransom amounts demanded have kept increasing.

The countries along the Gulf of Guinea have always attached importance to countering piracy and armed robbery at sea. In 2013, the heads of State and Government of 25 countries in the region met in Yaoundé, Cameroon at the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea and formulated a common maritime security strategy. Since 2014, the Gulf of Guinea Interregional Coordination Centre, regional centres for maritime security in Central Africa and in West Africa and multinational maritime coordination centres have been set up to implement the strategy. A meeting of senior officials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission was held in Yaoundé in February 2016 to facilitate the early entry into operation of the Interregional Coordination Centre.

At present, countries in the region face a myriad of challenges in their fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea. First, regional counter-piracy coordination mechanisms, including the Interregional Coordination Centre, the regional centres and the multinational maritime coordination centres, have not yet become fully operational because they are underfunded and underresourced. Second, countries along the Gulf lack the capacity to maintain maritime safety and security. Their port facilities are unable to provide logistical support for large-scale military operation at sea. Third, cooperation on joint enforcement, monitoring and patrolling, as well as information gathering and intelligence sharing, needs to be further enhanced.

Security Council efforts to date

At the initiative of Benin and Nigeria, the Security Council held an open debate on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea in October 2011 and adopted resolution 2018 (2011). The resolution welcomed the intention of countries in the region to develop a comprehensive strategy to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea, encouraged the international community to provide assistance and welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to deploy a United Nations assessment mission to examine the threat and come up with recommendations. The assessment mission was deployed by the Secretary-General in November 2011, and subsequently submitted its report to the Council (S/2012/45). In February 2012, another open debate was held by the Council, at the initiative of Togo, on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, and resolution 2039 (2012) was adopted, in which the Council encouraged States in the region to develop maritime security coordination centres and requested the Secretary-General to support efforts towards mobilizing resources. In August 2013, the Council issued a presidential statement, welcoming the summit held in Yaoundé and encouraging the international community to assist in implementing the outcomes of the summit (S/PRST/2013/13). In addition, the United Nations, through the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has provided support for efforts by the countries of the region to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Objectives and focus

The purpose of the upcoming open debate is to encourage the international community to further implement previous Security Council resolutions and presidential statements, put greater emphasis on the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and assess the threat they pose to regional peace, security and development. Priority will be given to encouraging the entry into operation of regional mechanisms for countering piracy. The meeting will stress the need for the international community to provide assistance and capacity-building support in the light of the actual difficulties encountered and needs of countries in the region in their efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea, so as to achieve regional peace, stability, prosperity and development. It is proposed that the open debate focus on the following topics:

- How to further implement Security Council outcome documents in this regard, so as to promote the implementation of regional maritime security strategies? How to help countries in the region to implement the integrated strategy to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea and to put the existing regional mechanisms to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea into operation as soon as possible?

- How to strengthen capacity-building for countries in the region with respect to maritime security, improve their infrastructure and ensure their ability to more effectively carry out joint enforcement, monitoring and patrolling at sea? How to help countries in the region formulate a legal framework against piracy and armed robbery at sea and step up information gathering and intelligence sharing?

- How to bolster the role of regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in

cracking down on piracy and armed robbery at sea? How can the United Nations, countries in the region and regional organizations bring into play their respective advantages, enhance coordination and cooperate effectively in countering piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea?

- How to strengthen preventive measures, in order to prevent or reduce the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea to regional peace and security? How to employ a comprehensive set of policies to help countries in the region to eliminate poverty and promote economic development, so as to address the problem of piracy and armed robbery at sea at its root? How to draw upon the experience and best practices of other regions in combating piracy, and to explore new ideas and approaches for greater international cooperation in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea?

Format and outcome

The meeting will take the form of an open debate. All Member States are invited to attend and make statements. The meeting will be held on 25 April 2016 and be chaired by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Liu Jieyi. Security Council members will hold consultations on whether the meeting will produce an outcome document.